

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-11 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, XG, ICFTU

SUBJ: CHRISTIAN UNIONS AGREE TO AFFILIATE WITH ETUC

REF: A) EC BRUSSELS 0620; B) COPENHAGEN 0295 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN ORGANIZATION OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (EO/WCL) HAS AGREED TO THE TERMS UNDER WHICH EO/WCL AFFILIATED UNIONS MAY APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC). END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEBRUARY 1 THE EO/WCL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ACCEPT THE TERMS OF AFFILIATION SET DOWN BY THE ETUC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON JANUARY 25. THE EO/WCL HAS URGED ITS AFFILIATED UNIONS TO INITIATE PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR ETUC MEMBERSHIP AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THE APPLICATIONS WILL BE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE ETUC CONGRESS NEXT MAY IN COPENHAGEN.

3. ON FEBRUARY 6 EO/WCL PRESIDENT JEFF HOUTHUYS TOLD THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE THAT A FAVORABLE VOTE AT THE ETUC CONGRESS IS ASSURED. NEVERTHELESS HOUTHUYS IS SOMEWHAT CONCERNED WITH THE POSITION OF DANISH LO PRESIDENT THOMAS NIELSEN WHO HAS STRONGLY OPPOSED THE ADMISSION OF EO/WCL UNIONS TO ETUC MEMBERSHIP BECAUSE THE BREAKING OF EO/WCL TIES WITH THE WCL WAS NOT MADE A CONDITION OF AFFILIATION (SEE REFTEL B). HOUTHUYS SAID THAT NIELSEN MAY RAISE THE ISSUE AGAIN AT THE TUC CONGRESS. HE DOES NOT VIEW THIS AS A SERIOUS OBSTACLE TO THE APPROVAL OF THE APPLICATIONS BY THE ETUC CONGRESS BUT CONSIDERS NIELSEN'S POSITION AN UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXPRESSED DESIRE OF AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF TRADE UNION LEADERS FOR THE UNIFICATION OF DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNIONS IN EUROPE.

4. HOUTHUYS ALSO DISCUSSED THE JANUARY 19 EAST-WEST MEETING AT GENEVA WHICH HE VIEWS AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR WEST EUROPEAN TRADE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNION LEADERS TO OPENLY DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF EAST-WEST TRADE UNION RELATIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPING A COORDINATED STRATEGY AND PROGRAM FOR FUTURE DEALINGS WITH SOVIET AND OTHER EAST BLOC LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. HE DESCRIBED THE WEST EUROPEAN APPROACH TO THE JANUARY 19 MEETING AS HAPHAZARD. HE WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF GERMAN DGB LEADER VETTER'S ROLE AT GENEVA WHICH, ACCORDING TO HOUTHUYS, CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION ON THE ISSUE OF HOLDING THE NEXT EAST-

WEST MEETING UNDER AN ILO UMBRELLA. HOUTHUYS TOLD US THAT THE ILO CONNECTION IS ESSENTIAL IF THE WEST HOPES TO HAVE ANY MEANINGFUL INFLUENCE ON EAST EUROPEAN BEHAVIOR IN ILO BODIES.

5. HOUTHUYS EXPRESSED CONCERN WITH THE PROBABLE NEGATIVE REACTION OF THE AFL-CIO TO THESE RECENT EAST-WEST DEVELOPMENTS. HE BELIEVES THAT WCL MERGER WITH THE ICFTU IS NOW A MATTER OF TIME AND THAT THE AFL-CIO SHOULD RESUME ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION. HOUTHUYS FEARS THAT THE AFL-CIO WILL INTERPRET WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION RELATIONS WITH THE EAST AS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZING THE LEGITIMACY OF SOVIET AND OTHER EAST BLOC LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AS TRADE UNIONS. THIS IS NOT SO, HE SAID.

6. HE BELIEVES MOST WEST EUROPEAN LEADERS ARE FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT THE SO-CALLED TRADE UNIONS IN EAST BLOC COUNTRIES ARE MERE INSTRUMENTS OF THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN THOSE COUNTRIES AND THAT SOVIET LABOR BOSS SHELEPIN IS NOT A TRADE UNIONIST, BUT REPRESENTS THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS HOUTHUYS IS CONVINCED THAT DETENTE IS A REALITY WHICH THE WEST CANNOT IGNORE. HE SAID WE MUST APPROACH IT IN A POSITIVE AND UNIFIED MANNER IN THE TRADE UNION FIELD IN ORDER TO REACH THE WORKERS OF EAST EUROPE DESPITE THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY THE NECESSITY OF DEALING WITH COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN ACHIEVING THAT END. HOUTHUYS ALSO BELIEVES THAT WITH A COORDINATED STRATEGY THE WEST HAS A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS IN SOME EAST BLOC COUNTRIES, SUCH AS POLAND AND HUNGARY. THIS, HE SAID, IS BY NO MEANS PART OF THE SOVIET MASTER PLAN FOR EXPLOITING EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND IS INDICATIVE OF THE TWO-WAY NATURE OF DETENTE. MYERSON

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